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The destruction of Poland

by  
Arnold J. Toynbee

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# THE DESTRUCTION OF POLAND.

A Study in German Efficiency.

BY

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE.

“The terrors of war, visited upon the innocent, peaceful population of Poland, have been augmented by famine, pestilence and death. One-third of a generation, the youngest, has practically ceased to exist; the remaining youth, old men, and women are now upon the threshold of actual extinction by starvation, disease and exposure.”—*Telegram of January 9th, 1916, from the Poles in America to Mr. Asquith.*

T. FISHER UNWIN, Ltd.,  
1, Adelphi Terrace, London.

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[illegible]

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## PREFACE.

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*The quotation on the title page of this pamphlet is taken from an appeal by the American Poles to the British Government. The American Poles drew attention to the terrible destitution which has descended upon the provinces of Russian Poland occupied by Germany, and urged a relaxation of the British Blockade on this unhappy population's behalf. The British Government replied by showing that the sufferings of Poland were not due to the general effect of the Blockade, but to the specific and deliberate policy of the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments in draining the resources of the conquered territory into their own store-chambers. If the two Governments will give satisfactory guarantees that this spoliation shall cease, the British Government will gladly allow supplies for the relief of the Poles to be imported into Poland from the United States. But it would merely be assisting Germany without benefiting the Poles if these same supplies were admitted into Poland under the system of German organisation which is set out in the following pages. A body of unimpeachable evidence is here presented, which reveals how subtle and how sinister this organisation has been. The German vampire is draining the life-blood of its Polish victim into its own exhausted veins.*

# THE DESTRUCTION OF POLAND.

## A Study in German Efficiency.\*

"I AM now writing to you for the special purpose of letting you know what I have learned from the witnesses, for since it has a certain importance, I should like you to make suitable use of it.

"I met to-day certain persons who had come straight from Warsaw and Lodz. I cannot mention their status or names, and shall merely observe that in my opinion their story represents the truth, with no more serious qualification than a certain partiality of view.

"According to these persons, the Germans are intentionally bringing about a famine in the country, in order to compel the male population to emigrate to Germany. They have closed the factories at Lodz, and they are interfering with the charities at Warsaw. There is no flour nor sugar to be had, not even in the Committee Stores on the production of tickets. A pound of meat costs 1 rouble,† a pound of bacon 1 rouble 80 kopecks.‡ People are feeding on bread made of washed potato-peelings and acorns. Spotted gastric typhus is prevailing alarmingly. People are simply dropping down in the streets from starvation, while the Committees are helpless, and continually harassed

\* The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness, for part of the evidence presented here, to an important series of articles on "German Rule in Poland," which appeared in "The Times" newspaper during November, 1915.

† About two shillings.

‡ About three shillings and eightpence.

by the Germans. A search was made from house to house for provisions, though no confiscations are reported. In the villages, however, they took away everything they could get hold of, while there is a prohibition against selling or transporting anything to the towns, except from the suburban districts, and that on payment of a special tax. This information is indirectly confirmed by the *Dziennik Poznański* (a Polish paper published at Posen), where a few days ago there appeared the following item of news:—

“ ‘ The petition of the Warsaw industrialists for setting the factories at work again was met by a categorical refusal on the part of Bessler,\* who declared that anybody could find employment in Germany, whence Polish working men had already sent to Lodz savings to the amount of 40,000 marks!!!

“ ‘ People of means are endeavouring to obtain permits for leaving the kingdom (of Poland), but their requests are not being granted.’ ”

These paragraphs are quoted from a letter, written on January 18th, 1916, by a trustworthy Polish correspondent to a friend in England. It is a general and categorical arraignment of German policy in those provinces of Russian Poland which have been invaded and occupied by the German troops in the course of the Eastern campaign. This policy of the enemy deserves our most searching regard, for it has an intimate bearing upon the deep issues at stake in the War—upon the ideals for which we are in arms ourselves, and upon those by

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\* The German Governor.



which Germany and her confederates are inspired.

Germany has paraded herself in this war as a mighty civilised nation, at grips with decadence on one frontier and barbarism on the other, and destined, for the good of all, to triumph over both. When she talks of peace, she pictures a Germany entrenched impreguably in the "borderlands," and a Europe which recognises in German domination the only power strong enough to quell its feverish strivings and dissensions and substitute an ordered discipline in their stead. In fact, Germany has assigned herself the imperial task of Rome; but, before the rest of the world assents to her assumption, it may be well to examine how she has acquitted herself in regions where she has already won a free hand. There could be no better test case than her administration in Russian Poland, the Eastern borderland which has been placed at her mercy by the fortunes of war.

Russian Poland, when it became the theatre of military operations, was, of course, far from being the barbaric, undeveloped country which the German theory assumed it to be. On the contrary, it had experienced, during the last generation, the same vigorous economic development as Germany herself, and in practice German industry was painfully aware of Polish competition. The German coalfields of Silesia were continuous with the Polish mines of Dombrova and the foundries of Sosnovitse, just across the frontier, which employed between them a population of half a million; and half

a million other workers had congregated, further north, round the mills and factories of Lodz. These thriving centres of Polish industry had sprung up between industrial Germany and the boundless markets of the Russian Empire, and they were favoured in competition, not only by their closer geographical proximity, but by the shelter of the Russian tariff wall, which gave them an additional preference against imported German wares. Dombrova, Sosnovitse, and Lodz had long been the eyesores of Beuthen, Elberfeld and Chemnitz, when the advance of the German armies in November, 1914, brought these districts definitely within the German lines. That was a year ago, and since then the Germans have rounded off their Polish acquisitions by the occupation of Warsaw. In what fashion have they used their power? The Roman precedent is double-edged. Are they organising Poland as the Romans organised Britain and Gaul, or are they annihilating her like Capua and Carthage?

When we turn to the evidence, we find "organisation" the official order of the day. Perhaps it was not very happily exemplified by the first acts of the invaders on Polish soil. At the frontier town of Kalish, for instance, the Prussian commander summoned the mayor and corporation from their duties to set them lying, face downwards and with revolvers at their heads, in the public street; and he disorganised their city still further by an artillery bombardment—three days' gunnery practice upon a civilian population of 50,000 souls.\* This was at

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\* See "The Destruction of Kalish," a statement by M. Bukowski, the Mayor, republished in English from the "Kurier Polski" of Milwaukee, Minnesota, U.S.A.

the beginning of August, 1914, and, during the German advance in November, there was another untoward incident at the Dombrova mines. The German military authorities condemned these Polish seams as superfluous, in view of the fine Silesian coalfields across the Prussian frontier, and proceeded, on this ground, to wreck the machinery and destroy the shafts. They would actually have destroyed them all, but for the intervention of their Austrian allies. However, these events were officially ignored and might have been treated by a well-disposed critic of German behaviour as the uncurbed discharge of a racial and economic rancour too long pent up. Those responsible for German policy knew better than to work on these lines. The experience of Belgium had taught them that open and indiscriminate atrocities are incapable in themselves of breaking the strength and spirit of a conquered nation, besides being ruinously costly in the good opinion of the rest of the world. Organisation is far better—organisation is the German's talisman, whatever end he has in view.

They organised Poland with a will. Hundreds of thousands of Polish workers—factory hands of Lodz and miners of Dombrova—had been hemmed in between the hostile lines, and with roads blocked, railways cut and bridges blown up, were isolated for the time being from their markets and their sources of supply. A million people were idle and on the verge of starvation—a desperate, unparalleled situation, and a magnificent opportunity for the

German organisers to intervene. They did so.

They proceeded to invade the Polish countryside with all kinds of German machines—motor lorries and threshing machines and machines for digging up potatoes—and they dug and threshed, and transported the autumn through. The foodstuffs in Poland were mobilised most effectively by this German organisation. Only, when they were collected, the Imperial German Government commandeered them all. The motor lorries spirited them away into Germany, while Lodz and Dombrova continued to starve.

When winter came, the German forces had strengthened and extended their hold over the country, and the German authorities were able to elaborate their organisation to a higher degree. Food supplies in Poland were now admittedly scarce (the previous organisation had seen to that), so it behoved a paternal military administration to safeguard the Polish population from unscrupulous speculation and forcing up of prices. The remedy was simple. The transport of food from one locality to another was strictly forbidden. Yet this drastic edict, though excellently designed to fulfil its negative purpose, was calculated to produce an immediate crisis in the thinly-stocked and thickly-populated industrial districts, unless it were supplemented by some central organisation of a positive kind. But the authorities had not been improvident. No sooner had uncontrolled local transport been prohibited, than they conferred the monopoly of trading in foodstuffs throughout Russian Poland on an accredi-

ted company, the "Commodity-Import, Ltd.," albeit a German company, with its headquarters in Prussian territory at Posen. At the same time public and private benevolence were co-ordinated, and a Polish relief committee was instituted under official auspices at Berlin. The Berliners owed something to the Poles, after all, for they were subsisting all the time on the food supplies which German organisation had diverted so competently from Poland to them. But they were not permitted to exercise their charity very long, for the Russian Army was tactless enough in the spring to do considerable damage in Memel, and the wrath of the German military authorities could not be appeased. Field-Marshal von Hindenburg counter-organised very comprehensive reprisals against the civilian population in the occupied Russian territories; and though most of these were not carried out, they did not fail altogether to bear fruit.

On the walls of Lodz and in the newspapers the following announcement appeared for several days :—

*"By order of the Chief Commander all military persons are herewith forbidden to give on the occasion of Sunday collections any contributions for the poor of the town of Lodz. If military persons intend to give anything for charitable purposes from the money saved out of their pay, it is recommended that such money be deposited with the local army command of Lodz, so that it may be used for the support of those of their German fellow-countrymen who have suffered at Memel and its surroundings from the brutal cruelty of the Russians.*

Ladies and gentlemen collecting must not in future solicit contributions from German officers or soldiers.

Lodz, March 22nd, 1915.

Imperial German President of Police,

VON OPPEN."

An ominous note of severity had thus been introduced; for organisation is versatile, and can be benevolent or severe as occasion requires. This was in March, 1915, and the inwardness of German administration now began rapidly to be revealed. By this time the "Import Company, Ltd.," was getting to work, and its ambiguous title was charged with as much disillusionment as a Delphic Oracle. For the benefit of the starving Poles it had been organised to import foodstuffs—out of Poland into Germany!

The German organisation of Polish foodstuffs had now passed through a series of stages. First came the more or less miscellaneous collection and removal of supplies in the autumn of 1914; then, in winter, the paralysing embargo on local transport, while a more comprehensive scheme was being prepared. Finally, on April 27th, 1915, came an order from the Imperial German Administration in Poland,\* which revealed what the function of the "Import Company, Ltd.," was to be.

By this edict, the German authorities put an embargo on all stores of grain and potatoes in Russian Poland, ordering that after 54 lb. had been left for each inhabitant up to the next harvest, the remainder was to be handed over officially to the "Import Company, Limited," at Posen. This order was accompanied by the following commentary:—"The company is to provide with flour these districts in which a scarcity of that article has been ascertained."

The mask was falling away, but the German authorities still made such vehement professions

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\* Official ordinance No. 4.

that the Polish population was not completely undeceived—though even if they had been, they could have acted no differently in the face of sheer military force. In the district of Kujavy, for instance, where there was plenty of grain, the German Landräte were addressing appeals to the peasants, who were jealously hoarding grain for the hour of need, to deliver it up in order that their countrymen in the coal districts of Dombrova, who were dying of famine, might be saved; and as a consequence, plenty of grain went from Kujavy to Germany. The coal district received an absolutely insufficient amount of flour, and that did not come from the district of Kujavy.

So several more months passed (during which the profits of the "Import Company, Ltd.," are said to have risen to more than 140 per cent.), until the German Government saw fit to avow its real purpose. But, on July 1st, 1915, a final order was published "for securing the grain in the districts of Poland situated on the left bank of the Vistula and remaining under German administration, for the needs of the German Army, the German market, and of the population inhabiting the occupied territory."\* The "population inhabiting the occupied territory" could take little comfort from their inclusion in the list. If the German Army and the German nation were to be served first out of the foodstuffs commandeered in Poland, it was obvious that the actual producers and rightful owners of the same would have a purely nominal share in the assets.

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\* Verordnungsblatt Nr. 12.

We have now ascertained one very definite object towards which German organisation in Poland has been directed. A nation of seventy millions, being strong in arms but short of food, strips a country of twelve millions, which has fallen under its military domination, and leaves those twelve million people to starve. The German argues in his heart: "We want this food and are strong enough to seize it. The owners cannot prevent us. They are not Germans. Let them take care of themselves." That is one aspect of German policy. It is a callous and criminal spoliation on a gigantic scale—the fruit of that corporate egotism which Prussian politics have erected into a creed. It would be execrable enough if it were the whole, but it is not the whole. There has been another purpose in the background that is viler still. If the German Administration had confined itself to draining Poland of its food, no one could have approved the act, yet a charitable onlooker might have assumed that Germany was led to it by her own necessity, and not by any active malevolence towards those Polish victims who happened to be starved as a result. This "crime of necessity," however, was unfortunately the means of usurious profit to the agents employed in carrying it out. We have already mentioned the "Import Co., Ltd.'s," 140 per cent., and the example was so dazzling that the authorities were inevitably tempted to extend the monopoly of grain to other articles of staple consumption in the "organised" territory. On December 1st, 1915, the Imperial German Administration in Russian Poland



declared for its own benefit a monopoly of tobacco and cigarettes; and in the course of the same month it assigned a monopoly of the vodka trade to the "War-Potato-Company-East" (Kriegskartoffelgesellschaft Ost), an association directed from Berlin.\* This Berlin Potato Company took over the potatoes requisitioned in Poland, and distributed them for the extraction of alcohol to the refineries in Germany. This alcohol was then reimported into Poland for consumption, while all the time the native Polish refineries were kept in idleness by a strict ban upon their activities, though they were completely adequate to the work, and had indeed sprung up to meet it during the period before the War.

Here there was no question of the needs of the German people, but only of the greed of the Prussian ruling class, which owns the German refining industry as well as the Imperial administration, and could not resist this excellent opportunity of making both work together for its private good. Yet mere extortion is not the whole explanation of the German officials' machinations. It will not, for instance, explain their policy in the case of such an important commodity as coal.

In Lodz, where great quantities of coal are required for fuel in the houses and in those factories which are working at least a small fraction of the time, the German authorities (the Police Office) have introduced a monopoly in coal and coke. No one is allowed to provide

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\* See "Nowa Reforma" of December 4th, 1915, and other contemporary journals of Cracow and Warsaw.

himself with coal by any other channel; certain stores bought by the manufacturers without the mediation of the German authorities have been confiscated.

The German authorities are exacting 4s. 5d. for a sack of coal which certainly did not cost them more than 2s. 2½d. The coal is taken from round Dombrova, mostly from the "Saturn" Mine, which belongs to the same Lodz manufacturers to whom the coal is subsequently sold at such preposterous prices. Even the coal which the town of Lodz is compelled to supply for fuel in the buildings used by the German authorities and the German army has to be bought from those same authorities in the first instance.

For a sack of coke which formerly cost 2s. 5d. the German authorities now charge 4s. 2½d. The police office has been making about £10 on each railway truck of coal, all in all, hundreds of thousands of pounds. The humanitarian president, von Oppen, had promised for some time to give back part of these profits, £900, to meet the needs of the town, but he soon forgot his promise.

What is the meaning of this German corner in Polish coal? It cannot be explained by necessity, like the corner in Polish food, for Germany is a great coal-producing country herself. In time of peace she exports quantities of coal beyond her frontiers, and now that a great part of this export has been stopped by the War, economic necessity would rather drive her to seek new markets for her own coal, and not new sources of supply. But has this policy a fiscal purpose, such as might be presumed to underlie

the monopoly of tobacco and spirits? Is the extortionate profit, wrung out for this coal by the German police, the ultimate reason for stinting the Poles of it to this extreme degree? Obviously not, for it would pay Germany better still to furnish the factories of Lodz, at reasonable prices, with as much coal as they could consume. No, the reason is deeper than that, and the policy pursued is further-reaching. Germany is not aiming merely at feeding herself during the War, or at fleecing the Poles while she holds them in her power. Her grand object is the permanent extirpation of Polish industry. The bombardment of Kalish and the wrecking of the Dombrova mines were true symptoms of what was to come. The work was only delayed till it could be organised and taken up on an infallible plan and a comprehensive scale.

There is no possible doubt about this when we examine other measures which the German Administration carried out against Polish industry as soon as they felt the moment favourable for a frontal attack. First, all kinds of auxiliary machines were taken away, turners' plant, metal cylinders, &c. *For the textile industry of Lodz, a systematic confiscation of the metal cylinders, which it is very difficult to replace, spells ruin*; yet from the factory of Poznanski alone, ten railway trucks of them were removed. Secondly, the whole stock of raw materials was requisitioned from the factories; first oil, leather, and sulphur, then iron, and finally the entire store of wool and cotton. According to the most modest calculation, wool and cotton

have been requisitioned in the factories of Lodz to a value considerably exceeding £5,000,000, while goods to the value of £1,500,000 have been similarly commandeered at Tchenstochova, without compensation being paid for any but a small proportion of the material carried away.

*These stores are handed over at low prices by the German Government to the manufacturers in Germany.* On the question of payment for requisitioned raw materials, the German authorities (*Reichseutschädigungskommission*) have decided that it will be a matter of grace on the part of the German Government if it makes payment for requisitions *im Feindeslande* (in the country of the enemy). That grace is to assume the following form. The goods will be valued according to the prices which existed before the outbreak of the war—namely, on July 24th, 1914. (The difference in the prices of cotton in Bremen is as follows : In July, 1914, 2 lb. of cotton cost 7d. to 7½d.; in July, 1915, 1s. 3d.) Moreover, the import duties originally paid on cotton will not be taken into account. From the sum appropriated for this purpose the German Government will pay, first of all, *the claims of German manufacturers against their debtors among the manufacturers of Lodz*, while the residuum will be paid out to the latter three months after the conclusion of peace.

Having thus settled the question, the Germans are unable to understand why the manufacturers of Lodz, almost all of whom are Germans, have no sympathy with the new rulers of the town, notwithstanding their national kinship,

or why they see in them their ruin, and long for the return of the Russians.

In truth, it is no question for these manufacturers of racial sympathy or affinity. It is a question of fighting for the industry they have built up against an organised attempt at its destruction—a battle for life and death, in which employers and workman have an equal stake. The social problem was acute in Lodz before the war. It is always acute where there has been a sudden industrial development. But in face of this remorseless attack, the conflict of capital and labour was transformed dramatically into heroic co-operation. The manufacturers of Lodz decided that after a fortnight had elapsed from the last normal pay-day, they would undertake to pay certain definite subsidies to the workmen (2s. 6d. to men, about 2s. to women, and 1s. 8d. to minors). In certain weeks the total of these subventions reached £9,000; the weekly average amounted to £6,500. This burden they took upon their shoulders at the moment when their industry had come to a standstill and their sources of profit were indefinitely cut off. Yet the task was an impossible one. There were at least 250,000 working people—men, women and children—on the employers' hands, and they had the implacable hostility of the German administration against them—a hostility which paralysed them at every turn. The Germans did not trouble to prohibit their philanthropy. They knew that it would exhaust itself betimes. But the Citizen Relief Committees, which had been constituted during the course of the year, were achieving

such notable results that special measures were necessary against them. Action was taken in September, and the Central Committee, which worked at Warsaw under official sanction, was suddenly dissolved. "It was a centre to 220 provincial Committees. It had under its care 17 hospitals, more than 200 teahouses, 300-400 schools and homes for children, and some 40 or 50 cheap restaurants. It also had at its disposal 17 wholesale stores with a working capital amounting to about £400,000. It took special care of hygiene and poor relief.

"Amid the disorganisation caused by the war, the Committee at Warsaw was the one institution which successfully organised relief for the population and to a large extent alleviated the condition of the poor. Moreover the dissolution of the Central Committee at Warsaw involved a simultaneous dissolution of the provincial committees, and that in turn caused the suspension of the district committees and of all co-operative institutions which remained under their direction. All relief action came to a stop."\*

Here is an exact estimate† of the havoc wrought by this master-stroke of German organisation in Poland:—

"The closing of the Committee resulted in the closing of the following institutions:—

"1. About two hundred Citizens' Committees in the Government of Warsaw.

"2. About two hundred wholesale provision shops of the Committee. The turnover of the

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\* Quoted from the newspaper "Nowa Reforma" of Oct. 7th.

† Furnished in a statement compiled, in authoritative Polish quarters, during December, 1915.

wholesale establishment of the Committee, from December to June, was 1,500,000 roubles.

“ 3. Three hundred schools for small children.

“ 4. All public educational institutions (libraries, people's halls, etc.) and the civic guard (special constables). Eleven inspectorates of this guard were dissolved, whereby about 6,000 special constables were prevented from doing their duty and the Government of Warsaw left without any police protection.

“ 5. 100 centres of food-distribution.

“ 6. A refugee bureau which helped about 8,000 people.

“ 7. The valuation of losses caused by the destruction of estates and villages was also stopped. This step is favourable to the Russian Government, which, on the basis of the valuations of the Central Citizens' Committee, has already paid 7,000,000 roubles compensation.

“ 8. The sanitary activity was stopped. About 20 hospitals and 30 dispensaries had to close their doors. Vaccination of the inhabitants had to be stopped, also the sanitary inspection of shops and goods, hospital buildings, baths and wells.

“ 9. About 150 tea-houses and places for distributing hot water had to close.

“ 10. All the district councils in the whole Government were closed.

“ 11. The rebuilding of the destroyed villages and towns, on which the Central Citizens' Committee had spent hundreds of thousands of roubles, was stopped.

“ 12. Every district council had a co-opera-

tive shop, which had to be closed after the dissolution of these councils.

“As a result of this action of the German Government a total disorganisation resulted, and the German Authorities were absolutely unable to cope with the situation.” Yet it is obvious that the German Administration in Poland must have foreseen the paralysis of social life in Poland which their arbitrary act involved—they must have foreseen it and deliberately intended to bring it about.

Why did Germany not content herself with ruining Polish industry? Why did she persecute the Polish workers so relentlessly, after their livelihood was gone and when it was only a question of relieving their distress? She persecuted them because she was determined to wrest something further from them yet. She had seized their food, confiscated their plant, withheld their coal, paralysed their co-operation; *and now she was bent on acquiring their most inalienable asset—their labour.* She knew better than to commandeer that. She knew that workmen reft away from their workshops and their homes, and driven at the bayonet’s point to do a task-master’s bidding, would do it ill—that you cannot exploit skill by violence. But if she exerted the violence in a subtler way, if she kept the bayonets in the background and confined herself to making life in Poland impossible, might not Polish skill be induced, by the logic of circumstances, to accept the alternative of migration of its own accord? This was the German view of the psychology of the



case, and they took all conceivable measures for putting it to the test.

Life in Poland was to be made impossible. So it was planned, and so it has been done. Relief-work has been paralysed, resumption of short-time work in the factories has been countered by an official veto. Schemes have been quashed which aimed at meeting unemployment by starting public works. The Press Censorship at Lodz does not allow any plans for public works to be alluded to, and it suppresses the advertisements for workmen inserted by the factories, when they see an occasional chance of resuming activity for a few days. Everything is done to make Poland a country without a future and to deepen the atmosphere of despair, in town and country alike. The irreplaceable forests are being systematically cut down. (A special company has been formed for the exploitation of the timber). The Polish workman sees all turning to ruin around him, and the starvation of his wife and children is ever present with him at home. . . .

That is the pressure on the one hand, while on the other he is solicited and allured continually to choose the alternative course. The Polish labourer is not unfamiliar with Germany; he has gone to work in the years before the war at Beuthen and Elberfeld and Essen, and now there are German official and semi-official labour bureaux all over the country, promising him higher wages in Germany than he has ever had in his life. "The German authorities," writes a Polish correspondent, "are doing everything in their power to induce workmen

to leave for Germany. They almost force them to go. *The workmen, however, are not willing to leave the country, and the majority of them go to work on the land.* People who go to Prussia for work must have a certificate. A man may only leave his (Prussian) employer when he has obtained another post. If he tries to return home, the Prussian authorities throw all sorts of difficulties in his way."

A whole nation has perhaps never before been subjected to such systematic temptation, and it is small wonder if there has been compliance here and there. "Warsaw," writes the "Nowa Reforma" on November 7th, "is getting depopulated on account of the incredibly high prices and the economic stagnation." Yet the migration to the countryside must have accounted for most of this depopulation, for the migration from Warsaw to Germany has been extraordinarily small. At the end of November, 1915, no more than 2,639 Warsaw workmen had answered the German call\*; 8,000 more had been beaten up from Piotrkov, Pabianitse and Lask; 21,000 working men and 1,702 working women have gone to Germany from Lodz, and 2,427 persons of the educated class—less than 25,000 people in all from a district where the cessation of industry has cut off the subsistence of 500,000 souls. If we add 20,000 emigrants from the coal-district, we have enumerated them all; and it will be obvious at once that the German bid for Polish labour has been a miserable fiasco.

The Germans hoped high things from their

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\* *Russkoyé Slovo.*" Dec. 1st,

“organisation” of Poland. They hoped to organise Polish food into German warehouses and to organise Polish industry out of existence, and that much they have achieved. *But their greatest dream was this exploitation of Polish man-power, this drafting of skilled and docile helots into German workshops and mines, so that every able-bodied German might be free to take his rifle and enter the fighting ranks, with a vast impetus to German military power.* It was an audacious conception, but it has failed—failed, as so often happens with German schemes, through a radical mistake in psychology. It might have been possible in an ant-hill—ants exploit in such fashion more tame and sluggish insects—but it is not possible in this “barbaric” or “decadent” Europe, which Germany aspires to organise on to a higher plane.

The spirit of the Polish people has not been broken, and Germany has been foiled of her expectation. But Poland is still in her power, and there is nothing to restrain Germany from her revenge. The suffering of Poland grows more terrible month by month.

Here is a description of conditions at Lodz, published by the “Journal de Genève” on December 1st, 1915 :—

“According to the special correspondent of the “Journal de Genève,” the condition of Lodz goes from bad to worse. The two chief evils, as was to be expected, are lack of employment and exorbitantly high prices. As for the former, the factories are now working only three days in the week, the raw material having been

mostly requisitioned by Germany. *At first the invaders did everything they could to persuade the artisans to emigrate to Germany, which is at present short of labour. But, when it was found that only a few thousand yielded to persuasion, the President of Police issued a proclamation* (end of September) in which, after announcing that the factories would soon be altogether closed and that no relief would be distributed during the winter from any source, he offered navy work on the repair of the roads and bridges, *work which it was known would employ only a limited number, and that only for a short time, as the sole alternative to emigration. That is the dilemma which the artisans have now to face.*

“ This leads to the question of prices. The German authorities have commandeered all provisions. Wheat may now be sold only by the *Goods Importation Company*, which buys it up cheap from the peasants and sells the resultant flour (war-flour) at exorbitant prices to the townspeople, who find their bread ‘ simply uneatable,’ as well as 10 per cent. above the price to which they were accustomed. The same company has the monopoly of sugar and alcohol. ‘ Huge quantities’ of pulse and oatmeal have been exported to Germany, and their price at Lodz has gone up fourfold. The present scheme for exporting to Germany 12-15 million quintals of potatoes will cause a similar rise in what is now ‘ almost the only resource left to the poor.’ Almost all the cattle have already been exported, and the price of meat, which for some months has been quite beyond the reach of the

artisans, has gone up 400-500 per cent. Even the handfuls of bread, meat, and flour, which the artisans who have taken work in the fields bring back with them, are confiscated at the city-gates, on the plea of contraband.

“It was oppressive measures of the same kind which brought about the ‘riots of Lodz.’ In the course of September, the municipality cut off the relief which had hitherto been paid to the wives of Russian reservists. The women, to the number of nearly 15,000, rioted, and the authorities were compelled to renew the grants, setting aside 3 million marks for the purpose.

“As for landed property, the German authorities have piled such heavy taxes upon it that even the German landlords, of whom there are a good many, have risen in revolt and are joining the Poles in deputations to Warsaw and Berlin.

“Under these circumstances, can it be wondered that ‘indignation against the proceedings of the German authorities is growing from day to day and that, especially among the working classes, it is now passing into open hostility.’”

This terrible account of the situation is confirmed and supplemented by evidence from other quarters. Here, for instance, is a quotation from the “*Nowa Reforma*,” of November 20th, which exposes the full iniquity of the Posen “Import Company, Ltd.”:—

“A communication from Lodz, dated November 18th, describes the unfathomable distress of the city. Prices are higher than the highest known anywhere else. According to the “*Nowy Kuryer Lodzki*”: “At a sitting of the Town

Council of Lodz Mr. Winnicki, a town councillor of Polish nationality, raised the question why the German 'Import Company,' which has been invested by the German Government with the monopoly of buying grain for Russian Poland, pays  $7\frac{1}{2}$  roubles for 1 cwt. of rye when it buys it in the districts of Russian Poland under German occupation, but charges at Lodz 23 roubles for a bag of 'war flour' which contains hardly 40 per cent. of the 1 cwt. of rye. In answer to Mr. Winnicki's question, the senior burgomaster, Herr Schoppen,\* answered that an injustice is certainly done to the inhabitants of Lodz, but that he could do nothing to lower prices, since the prices at which the 'Import Company, Limited' bought grain in Russian Poland, as well as the prices it charged for grain at Lodz and elsewhere, had been fixed by Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, Supreme Commander in the East, and could not, therefore, be modified by the town administration. In order, however, to ease the situation to some degree, Herr Schoppen promised in his own name, and in that of the German police, to lower the octroi for the importation of food into Lodz, considerable supplies being available at some distance from the city.

"The delegation from Lodz which went recently to Berlin to raise a loan for the town, complained about the excessive price of bread. It asked that the town might be allowed to provision itself without the intervention of the 'Import Company, Ltd.,' as is done in neigh-

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\* A German official appointed by the German Government.

bouring towns, where bread is consequently cheaper by about 30 per cent.

“The scarcity of fuel in Lodz is equally the fault of the ‘Import Company.’ The town requires about 150 railway trucks of coal a day, and it has to import it by way of Germany instead of getting it straight from Polish coal-fields. This city of half a million inhabitants has no stores of fuel, and if the railway communication is interrupted it may be left destitute of fuel altogether, especially as the forests round Lodz have been cut down during the war.”

That is a faithful picture of Lodz as it was three months ago. The nightmare of starvation had haunted the city the whole summer through, and now it was accompanied by a more frightful prospect still. Winter was at hand—the merciless winter of North-Eastern Europe—and they were to be abandoned without fuel to the intolerable cold. Here is the plight that stared them in the face, as it is outlined in the “Lodzianin,” the Social Democratic newspaper in the town :—

“There are about 60,000 householders in Lodz. Every one of them is entitled to a coal card, and as only 150 of these are issued a day (which makes 4,500 a month), the rest are likely to remain without fuel for the winter. The cold favours the development of tuberculosis. Last year we had 40 per cent. mortality from tuberculosis, although conditions then were much better than can be hoped for this winter.

“The manufacturers have been told to give support only to those workmen who have been

employed by them for no less than 15 years; *that practically means the old people who are not fit to go to work in Prussia.* The German administration is assisted in promoting emigration by the municipal authorities, though it is said that there are Poles, too, on the town council. *The town committee for poor relief helps only those who bring certificates from the German Labour Exchange to the effect that they are not fit for work in Germany.*

“ We raise a solemn protest, in the name of the Polish labouring classes, to all the more enlightened elements of the German nation and to German Socialists in particular. The present condition of things is reducing the Polish proletariat to mental and physical exhaustion.”

That was the last cry of despair, before the winter descended upon Lodz like a shroud.

No one can tell what may happen to that once flourishing community of 500,000 souls. The worst of the season is still before them; yet the most recent glimpses of their state are already so appalling as to raise doubts whether any will survive to see the return of spring.

Here are a few sentences from a statement drawn up, in authoritative Polish quarters, as recently as January, 1916 :—

“ On May 22, 1915, all textile mills in Lodz were shut and all stocks of raw materials, as well as part of the machinery, were confiscated. The same thing happened a little later in Warsaw and Sosnovitse. . . .

“ The working people are starving. Hundreds of people are dying from a new illness caused by lack of food. The majority of in-



phants have died, and the death-rate is now much higher than the birth-rate.”

That is a bare summary of what has occurred; but the agony of Lodz is revealed in detail in the narrative of a visitor to the city, which was published in the “*Nowa Reforma*” not long ago:—

“Wishing to acquaint myself with the misery in the factory towns and to consider means of relief, I went to Lodz. What I found surpassed my most awful fears. The population is slowly dying, after exhausting its forces in a hopeless struggle. I went under the guidance of the relief caretaker of the district and I visited only one street, Ciemna, in the suburb of Bluty. We went to the house of a boy who is now in our Home for Children at Kutno. We were to take his love to his parents. ‘Our parents are gone,’ answered his eldest sister of about 15. ‘Father died a week ago of exhaustion, and the day after father’s funeral mother died of typhus. It is the same next door. Both the father and the mother have died during the war, leaving four small children in the care of a brother of 18.’

“When we entered this other tenement we found the youngest child of two dead and the girl of four dying. There were others who had no strength left to fetch wood from the forests round the town, and were burning everything they had—tables, beds, and even picture-frames.

“In one of these tenements we found only a group of crying children. The mother had died and the father had gone out into the country to beg for potatoes. They had sold everything.

even the bedding, the most precious possession of the poor.

“All the factories at Lodz are closed, but some of the rich manufacturers are nobly supporting their employees. They give them a rouble (2s.) a week. The poor creatures, who have been subsisting many months now on that pittance alone, are growing anæmic and consumptive; but they are rich in comparison with the families to which the Town Committee allows 40 kopecks (10d.) for each adult and 6d. for every child. There are about 60,000 of these families in the care of the Committee, for everyone is economising on account of the general high prices, and many artisans, tailors and servants have lost employment. Those who own any property do not receive any support from the Committee, and consequently the owners of the houses in the suburbs where nobody pays any rent, are sometimes worse off than the workmen. I shall never forget a mother with five small children. As she held in her arms the youngest, who was only two years old and who already resembled a corpse, she said to me with desperate resignation: ‘I do not ask for any medicine for him at the hospital, for the doctor told me to give him nourishing food, and I can give him nothing but water.’

“In a radius of a few miles round the town there is a regular procession of starving paupers fetching wood or potatoes. I have met a number of people who are devoting their services to the relief of this misery. They have instituted cheap kitchens, homes for children and orphans, free dinners for school children,

tailoring establishments for poor girls; but all those institutions have to contend continually against lack of funds. Some of them have even had to be closed because local philanthropy is unequal to their maintenance. The cheap kitchens provide for 3 kopecks ( $\frac{3}{4}$ d.) a portion of soup so poor that the people who try to live on it die of exhaustion; but even such soup cannot be provided for all, as 3 kopecks is far below cost price on account of the incredibly high prices of food."

That is what Germany has done to Lodz, and the fate of Lodz this winter is being shared by every town and village in the territory subject to German "organisation." Nothing could be more terrible than the situation at Warsaw itself. The following paragraph from the "Kurier Warszawski" gives a sufficient glimpse of the ghastly life-in-death that reigns there:—

"Nowadays there is a dearth of everything in Warsaw, even of wood shavings to light and warm the room. In the Dzika Street opposite Stawki, near the cemeteries, there is a big timber yard. On the pavement in front of it a group of women and children, poorly clad, watch eagerly for the removal of timber from the yard, because then some shavings sometimes drop from the basket or cart on to the muddy pavement; that is the signal for a struggle, the prize of which is that little scrap of wood. Outside the yard stands a watchman with a whip. On Sunday, at noon, we had been watching how a boy, a scholar of one of the private secondary schools of Warsaw, had collected a basketful of shavings which had been lying

about in the yard. With joy radiant in his face and eyes, he was carrying the basket out of the yard gate, when he was spied by the watchman. There was a short, brutal struggle, and the watchman had snatched away the pitiful booty, while a group of ragged women and children were fighting to secure the shavings which fell out of the basket into the mud. . . .”

It would be monotonous to multiply the description of such scenes—and indeed no purpose would be served by quoting more; for we have found a conclusive answer to the question with which we set out. We questioned Germany’s programme for a European settlement, and undertook to examine, from the Polish evidence in hand, what the consequences would actually be if Germany really succeeded in annexing the borderlands in East and West and imposing her military supremacy upon the other nations of continental Europe. The present fate of Poland foreshadows with inexorable clearness the fate that such a settlement would bring upon us all. Germany is not proving herself the appointed saviour of the modern world. She has degenerated into a vampire-state, that sucks the life-blood of any nation that falls into her grip. The triumph of German “organisation” would not bring the millennium: it would bring darkness and the shadow of death.



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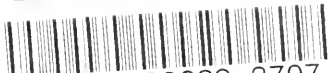
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